

## Teacher Questions

*In most behavior charts you see the red as the “contact parent” level. Was there a reasoning for the reversal of colors to where the red is for outstanding? I really like this system.*

*Thank you,  
Nancy*

There were two reasons behind the decision to go with the colors that are used on the chart.

The first had to do with getting teachers and their students to move beyond the Old School thinking associated with the color-coded pocket chart. Although students started the day on the best color, some of them would fall from color to color as a result of inappropriate behavior. What students learned was that if they made a mistake they would lose a color. However, if you were doing the right thing, not much happened.

Consequently, my concern was that the same negative thinking may have hung around had the Clip Chart displayed the traditional color scheme in which red is a bad thing. The choice of colors I used was intended to: 1) change the previous mind-set; and 2) encourage teachers to seek out and recognize what is good and right and worthy in the classroom.

It’s quite possible that this concern of mine may have been overblown and that the impact of the actual colors used is negligible; nonetheless, it was my desire to get everyone to look at this somewhat disconcerting color reversal—and thus, the Clip Chart strategy itself—in a new light.

The other reason had to do with the psychology of colors. When it comes to people and their emotions, it’s the reds, oranges, and yellows that are the warm, feel-good colors. Unfortunately, though, red has been traditionally used for a variety of restrictive messages: stop lights, stop signs, threat levels, etc. This subtle but rather pervasive application of a small slice of the color spectrum has conditioned us to see red as dangerous. But what about a valentine heart? And who doesn’t enjoy the warm of the yellow sun?

Several times over the past couple of years I’ve thought about releasing a second version of the chart using the more traditional colors but have resisted for the reasons stated above. My consolation was that if someone liked the concept but not the color scheme, they could do what I originally did and make their own Clip Chart out of laminated construction paper. It is, after all, the process of being positive that’s more critical than the color scheme.

Regards,  
Rick

PS

If there’s one thing I’ve learned in life it’s this: reality can be changed. This is especially true when it comes to life in the classroom.

*Got a question? Send an email to: [rick@newmanagement.com](mailto:rick@newmanagement.com)*